

**TOWN OF NEEDHAM
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

LOCATION: Public Services Administration Building (PSAB), Charles River Room

ATTENDING: Janet Carter Bernardo (Chair), Sue Barber, Artie Crocker, William Murphy, Peter Oehlkers, Deb Anderson (Director of Conservation), Clay Hutchinson (Conservation Specialist).

GUESTS: None.

J. Carter Bernardo opened the public meeting at 7:30 p.m.

MINUTES: Minutes from the January 23, 2020 meeting were reviewed.

Motion to approve the minutes of January 23, 2020 by A. Crocker, seconded by S. Barber, approved 3-0-2.

ENFORCEMENTS AND VIOLATIONS

766 CHESTNUT STREET – TREE REMOVAL VIOLATION

Staff updated the Commission on the status of the 766 Chestnut Street tree removal violation. The homeowner is in the process of compiling an after-the-fact Notice of Intent with restoration comments provided by the Commission at the last meeting. Staff provided a drafted Enforcement Order for review and ratification. The Commission also requested Staff contact the consultant to ensure the plans included in the forthcoming Notice of Intent include the 25-foot and 50-foot Buffer Zones.

Motion to ratify the Enforcement Order for 766 Chestnut Street by A. Crocker, seconded by W. Murphy, approved 5-0-0.

HEARINGS:

475 SOUTH STREET (DEP FILE #234-840) – NOTICE OF INTENT

J. Carter Bernardo opened the hearing at 7:47pm. No one from the public was present for the hearing, including the Applicant or their consultant, however, the revisions to the application had been submitted. Staff overviewed the changes to the plan. The changes included a small additional area of impervious driveway within jurisdiction, as well as the removal of all the remaining trees along South Street. As discussed at the last hearing for 475 South Street, there were concerns by the Commission that the trees the Applicant was proposing to save may not survive the construction phase activities. The revised materials proposed to remove the remaining 10 trees, with an arborist's letter reviewing the decline of each tree. The revised plans also included a replanting plan of 19 trees and 15 bushes. The new driveway layout was still designed to direct runoff to a planting basin along South Street.

Motion to close the public hearing for 475 South Street (DEP File #234-840) by A. Crocker, seconded by W. Murphy, approved 5-0-0.

Motion to issue the Order of Conditions for 475 South Street (DEP File #234-840) by A. Crocker, seconded by W. Murphy, approved 5-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

RIDGE HILL RESERVATION – USE REQUEST

The Commission received a use request from a member of the public for a “Fun Run” event hosted by the Needham Running Club. The event is proposed for June 20, 2020 and will take place in the evening, before dusk. The Applicant also noted that porta-potty facilities could be provided if other restroom accommodations are not available, and that any trash generated will be removed at the end of the event. The Commission confirmed the approximate time of sunset for June 20, and asked Staff to make them aware of some trail deterioration at the end of Swamp Trail, to ensure a safe event.

Motion to approve the use of Ridge Hill Reservation for the Needham Running Club on June 20, 2020 by W. Murphy, seconded by A. Crocker, approved 5-0-0.

ROSEMARY GIRL SCOUT BUILDINGS DEMOLITION – DPW ACCESS APPROVAL

Staff had met with the Department of Public Works to discuss the removal of the old Girl Scout buildings on the Town Property at Rosemary Lake. The camp building and two latrines are in disrepair, and a fourth building had previously been lost to a fire 20 years ago. There is a fire access road that had been installed at the time of the fire, which is proposed to be used to access the remaining buildings. To gain access, the DPW will need to selectively prune back some of the overgrowth encroaching into the fire road. Metal plates will also be placed within the fire road over an existing culvert to protect the stream crossing. Straw wattle will be utilized for the removal of one latrine that is upgradient from a wetland area.

Motion to approve the access over the existing fire road for removal of the old Girl Scout buildings by A. Crocker, seconded by S. Barber, motion passed 5-0-0.

EVERSOURCE ENERGY RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES - DISCUSSION

Staff forwarded a notice from Eversource Energy stating their intent to perform maintenance activities along the Right of Way corridor south of Cutler Park. The activities will include exempted vegetation management under the lawfully existing utility lines. The Commission noted that the area previously had a Notice of Intent for wetland restoration outside of the immediate corridor.

SELECT BOARD – NIKE/RIDGE HILL MEETING – DISCUSSION

The Commission discussed the Select Board meeting that occurred on Tuesday, February 11, 2020. Included on their agenda was a discussion on the previous use study conducted for the Nike Site and Ridge Hill Reservation, as well as public comment on the future use and management of the Select Board-owned parcels within Nike and Ridge Hill. There is funding for additional study. Public comments at the Select Board meeting included a contentious discussion on the construction of an ice-skating facility as well as the preservation of the existing open space and contiguous wildlife habitat. The parcels currently host a dog park and community farm at the Nike Site and several deteriorating buildings at Ridge Hill Reservation.

The Commission discussed the Select Board’s intention to further pursue a direct connection between the Nike Site and Ridge Hill Reservation. Ridge Hill Reservation is the largest contiguous open space parcel held by the Conservation Commission and includes extensive wetland resources and priority habitats. The Commission raised concerns about the impacts to, and loss of, wildlife habitat by the fragmentation a roadway would cause. The Commission discussed being cautiously open to low impact alternative uses of the site in conjunction with

the Select Board parcels which might encourage greater use of the open space resource by the residents of Needham.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by A. Crocker, seconded by W. Murphy, approved 5-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45p.m.

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING:

February 27, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. in the Public Services Administration Building, Charles River Room.